

**Speech of Mr. Vladimir Norov,  
First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Briefing “Uzbekistan’s  
Role in Regional Integration and Ensuring Regional Security”  
(8 October 2003)**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sincerely glad to be here today. First of all, I would like to express appreciation to the European Institute for Asian Studies for the kindly provided opportunity to deliver the speech to such a dignified audience, to state Uzbekistan’s position on the issues of regional security and Central Asian integration.

We all witness the fundamental changes in the world, which have occurred for the last years, bringing to formation of an absolutely new system of international relations. Geopolitical, economic, social as well as information and communication surface of the planet is being changed fundamentally.

At the same time, together with dynamic development of these processes, we face broadening and toughening of character of transnational threats and challenges. The tragic events of September 11 demonstrated the obvious necessity to consolidate efforts of the international society in order to confront these threats effectively. Hard-edged fight against international terrorism, political extremism, narco-trafficking have become the priority factors in formation of the new world order. In fact, **we speak about the most important fracture in the international social perception**, as the world probably just started to realize the danger and destructive power of the modern threats.

Asking ourselves: **how to protect the world from wars and conflicts, how to make the life on the Earth more stable and prosperous**, today everybody believes that success in fight against modern challenges is only reachable if all states join their efforts. And, on the contrary, unilateral actions and certain self-dependency doom to fail.

Since the first days of its independence, Uzbekistan has been taken peaceful foreign course based on such universally accepted principles as priority of national and state interests, international law, equality of

rights and non-interference into internal affairs of other countries, settlement of all debates by peaceful means and negotiations.

Uzbekistan's Foreign Strategy aims, first of all, at ensuring of national security, providing assistance in preserving Central Asian peace and stability. Uzbekistan, entirely supporting the principle of security indivisibility, is the active participant in the multilateral diplomacy, the basis of which is to **bring together the efforts of all states of the world**.

In this context, we strongly oppose some assertions that under the conditions of globalization the world will inevitably face with the conflict of civilizations. In that connection, Islam civilization is often called the main factor creating a conflict. I would like to stress that the unique history and civilization of the peoples of Central Asia, where Islam, Christianity and Judaism have been in joint existence during centuries, strongly disproves these assertions, which convert the reasons of the escalation of international terrorism and other dangerous aspirations into the pure ideology. If we are to speak about confrontation I have to say that it really exists. But it is not a mythical conflict of civilizations, it is a clash of all international society with barbarism, powerful destructive forces challenging openly with today and future of mankind. Therefore, we strongly believe that today it is necessary to take all possible measures to ensure that the **progress withstands effectively to regress, and the stability – to catastrophes and destructions**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the context of the modern world processes, I would like to highlight the following principle points, which are in the regional agenda:

**First.** Analyzing the current international situation, it is important to take into account the specific character and problems of individual regions. The example of Central Asia shows that for the last several years the regional society has been facing violent, I would even say, massive expansion of extremist ideology, aggression of the international terrorism and narco-mafia, which look at the region as the base for implementation of their far-reaching strategic goals. These plans are well-known. They try to undermine peace and security in Central Asia as well as to slacken stability in other regions of the Planet.

The serious threat to the stability in Central Asia is posed by the **religious-extremist organization “Khizb-ut-Takhrir”**, which has been determined by many countries as outlawed. The threat is that undermining activity and destructive ideology of “Khizb-ut-Takhrir” aim mainly at young generation. We in Uzbekistan believe that **psychological pressure that making people to become zombies is not less dangerous than the weapons of mass destruction.**

Lessons learned for the last years convince that it is much more difficult to overcome consequences of terrorist and extremist activity rather than to prevent the activity itself. We actively use the means of “preventive diplomacy”, which Uzbekistan follows since the first days of its independence. It is quite obvious that notable results can only be achieved when we eliminate the centers, which finance and organize the forces of international terrorism. Moreover, the new global reality today is fanatical, maniacal terrorists’ aspirations aimed at getting an access to the weapons of mass destruction.

There is no doubt that the world community has to counter these plans by the real working system of measures. Uzbekistan welcomes the progress made in elaboration of legal documents on combating international terrorism. Supporting the activity of the counter-terrorist Committee of the Security Council, at the same time, we consider that the Regional anti-terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Organization for Cooperation, which is open for cooperation with other similar centers, will become one of the important components of the global security system.

I would like to state with satisfaction that Uzbekistan cooperates closely with the European Union and individual European countries on joint fight against transnational threats. The Second meeting of “Uzbekistan-European Union” subcommittee on justice, internal affairs, customs cooperation and other relevant issues was held in Tashkent on July 24, 2003.

At the same time, in our view, to confront the terrorist and extremist threat, it is expedient to facilitate the work on **implementation of the following measures:**

- Expanding of consultative and technical assistance from the international community on fight against international terrorism and other transnational threats. We believe that the additional impulse in this work could be made by signing the appropriate agreement between Uzbekistan and European Union, which would include issues on extradition of the criminals, members of the terrorist and extremist organizations.

- Deepening of cooperation on the issues of border control and management, including taking of joint measures on fight against arms and drugs smuggling.

**Second.** Transit of narcotics through the territory of Central Asian states is an extremely critical regional problem. In accordance with the UN statistics, **more than 500.000 people** are involved into the world trafficking of drugs produced in Afghanistan. The narkomafia has converted into the global force possessing huge economic potential. Its financial capabilities exceed budgets of many countries of the world and the biggest transnational corporations. The annual turnover of the international drug trafficking, according to different estimations, varies from **USD 500 to 800 billions**. These enormous financial flows are at disposal of the destructive forces, which aggressively and impertinently violate the norms and principles of the international law.

It will not be exaggeration to say that the Central Asian countries are “first blowed” by narkomafia and international terrorists. The reality is that Central Asia namely is standing on the route of drug flow to the developed countries. It is known that in the West drugs are being seized by grams and huge efforts and means are being involved. Only in Uzbekistan in 2002 the law enforcement agencies seized and destroyed about 1 tone of drugs. For the last years trafficking of more than 50 tones of drugs and 72 tones of precursors was prevented.

Dangerous aspirations and plans of international narco-syndicates, the efforts of which are directed against the social and political stability and foundations in Central Asian states, above all, are determined by:

*first*, formation of stable links with certain interested groups within the countries of the region, including for ensuring of transit of drugs;

*second*, laundering and legalization of narco-money through the national and international financial institutions;

*third*, active involvement of narcomafia into struggle for the political power;

*forth*, “services” provided for narko-transit through the territory of the Central Asian states, as a rule, are paid by the narcotics itself, which stipulates reproduction of their illegal turnover.

It is clear, that the international narcomafia is extremely interested in non-stable territories, the new grounds of local conflicts and permanently maintained political and social-economical tensions. The simple reason of this is that **any destabilized country is the “proper market” for narko-business and narko trafficking.**

We think that the international efforts in this area will become more active with commencing of work of the **Regional Center on combating trans-border crime**, initiated by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov during the visit of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to Uzbekistan in October 2002. I can state with satisfaction, that the first meeting of experts was held in Tashkent in June this year, and realization of this initiative is gaining concrete outlines. We depend on support of UN and donor-countries on this issue.

**Third** – the problem of Afghanistan. You are aware, that, as President Islam Karimov has stated, as a result of 20-years old war “**this country converted into the real training camp for all kinds of international terrorists and extremists, perhaps, the biggest source of narcotics and narco traffic**”.

The peoples of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan are traditionally linked by the centuries-long common history, moral-spiritual and cultural values. The people of Uzbekistan had been watching the events, which had taken place in Afghanistan for decades, with the sense of great pain and friendly sympathy, and it was always ready to help to the Afghan people.

For many years, from high tribunes Uzbekistan has urged the international community to settle the Afghan problem, suggesting concrete proposals. The practical result of these efforts was the work conducted by the contact group "6+2".

With beginning of the anti-terrorist operation, where Uzbekistan was one of the first participants, positive changes have occurred in

Afghanistan, which created the stable prerequisites for full-scale peaceful process in the country, revival of its State system and national economy.

In principle, Uzbekistan authorities support the Karzai' s government. The first time for many years, Afghanistan has become the full member of international community. The peaceful life is gradually getting well in hand, conditions for reconstruction of social and economic spheres are being created.

Uzbekistan thinks that reconstruction of the life support systems as well as rehabilitation of Afghan economy are the necessary and basic conditions for settling peace and socio-political stability in the country and, as a consequence, for strengthening regional and international security. Furthermore, from the earliest times, Afghanistan was one of the important transit networks and, hence, its transport and communication capabilities provide with great perspectives for the regional and international cooperation.

With a view of quick stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan, our country is undertaking all its efforts and practical steps to render a real assistance to Afghan people. Our country' s contribution to the post-war reconstruction of Afghanistan is the following:

*first, more than 1 million tons* of humanitarian and commercial cargo have been delivered to Afghanistan through the territory of Uzbekistan;

*second*, Uzbek specialists are participating in reconstruction works, in restoration of irrigation systems and oil and gas facilities, in building social installations. Particularly, our country participates in reconstruction and rebuilding of **10 bridges** on Termez - Mazari-Sharif - Kabul route, 5 of which have already been put into operation;

*third*, the Government of Uzbekistan has expressed its preparedness to build the Khayraton-Mazari-Sharif railroad, Khayraton-Puli Khumri power line, to take part in the tender on building of an electric power station, to reconstruct waterworks facilities in Jalalabad, Sarda, Kokcha, to construct power facilities in the Northern and Central regions of Afghanistan.

The important factor in Uzbek-Afghan cooperation is that the specialists of Uzbekistan have 30-years work experience in Afghanistan. **Our country has great resources of different planning organizations and construction experience.**

We realize very well that, eventually, reconstruction of the Afghan economy and infrastructure will allow in short terms to restore peaceful life of Afghan people, who had been suffering for a long time.

Speaking on problems of Afghanistan, it is important to note that one of the most important directions of post-war reconstruction of the country is strengthening of the internal political stability. In Afghanistan itself and beyond its borders, there are powers, which stand against the peaceful process. Terrorist activities in southern and south-eastern parts of the country have become more frequent. Anti-governmental forces supported by Taliban, "Al-Qaeda" and Afghanistan Islamic Party are being formed. The analysis of development of military-political situation demonstrates that pro-Taliban forces are increasingly changing their tactics from subversive and terrorist acts to well-planned military activities.

As the administrative resources of Karzai' s government is still limited by Kabul zone, we think that the first objective should be creation and strengthening of the basis for the new Afghan governance, improving effectiveness of power structures in the center and regions. The logic of life is pushing for necessity to reach **common national consensus** on the issues of democratization of society, establishing of capable and wide represented political system.

The important condition for ensuring internal political stability in Afghanistan is its **demilitarization**. There are still significant arsenals of military equipment, weapons and ammunition in the country, which had been collected during the years of war. Neutralization of this destructive potential is the first task to be realized. In this regard, it is quite obvious that it is necessary to completely disarm the military-political groups.

Under these conditions, the meaning of **practical cooperation among Central Asian states within the framework of NATO** is getting increasingly important, in particular, in the framework of ISAF mission where Alliance is playing the leading role. Possible extension of ISAF mandate beyond Kabul may positively influence the security of the

country on the threshold and during the national elections, it will assist in formation and strengthening centralized law enforcement structures in Afghanistan.

It is necessary to emphasize that during the visit of Lord Robertson, NATO Secretary General, to our country in September, Uzbek side has confirmed its preparedness to cooperate with NATO by providing logistic support to ISAF including by providing permission to flights through its air space, ground transport infrastructures, transportation services for humanitarian cargo and personnel, medical support.

The indispensable condition for successful stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan is **non-interference of other states to domestic affairs in this country**. In this regard, external assistance, from our point of view, can not and must not compete with each other. It must firmly and unambiguously respect proper decisions of the international community.

Finally, during the post-conflict restoration of Afghanistan it is necessary to use more actively the potential of the neighboring with Afghanistan countries, **actively involve this country into the process of regional integration and cooperation**. It is believed in Uzbekistan that involving of Afghanistan into Central Asian integration process will positively influence strengthening of stability and security in the country and in the region as a whole.

**Fourth.** Uzbekistan supports strict observance by all states of the universal nuclear non-proliferation regime since without this it is impossible to speak about strategic stability neither on international, nor on regional levels.

All this strengthens even more the importance and the urgency of the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov concerning the announcement of Central Asia as a nuclear weapons free zone. The Uzbek side highly appreciates the efforts taken by the UN Department on Disarmament to support the expert group that prepares the text of the regional Treaty. No doubt that creation of the new Zone will promote strengthening of regional and global security.

Thereby, we satisfied by the fact that process of creation of the Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone comes to its conclusion. Simultaneously, Uzbekistan calls upon permanent members of UN Security Council to develop, with participation of the countries of the region, the consolidated position on provisions of the Treaty and its protocols in order to have an internationally legitimate Central Asian Zone.

**Fifth.** Positive changes in Central Asia that have become possible due to actions of the international coalition in Afghanistan have created real preconditions for steady and progressive regional development.

As you are aware, Uzbekistan, as well as other countries of the region, has inherited from the old system one-sidedly developing, hypertrophied economy. In order to avoid sharp deterioration of the live standards and social shocks during the first years of independence it was necessary to address a great number of complicated and ambiguous social and economic problems in the shortest terms.

We realize that the foreign capital will come to us if investors will be ensured in safety of their investments and if necessary legal and democratic procedures will be practically implemented.

At the same time, while speaking about acute social and economic problems, solution of which has vital significance for security and sustainable development of the Central Asian countries, it is necessary to mention the need to overcome transport and communication isolation of the region. This problem was underlined once again during the UN International Conference, which took place in Almaty (Kazakhstan) at the end of August this year.

Thus, the special attention is drawn to multilateral Agreement on creation of the International Trans-Afghanistan corridor signed by Uzbekistan, Iran and Afghanistan in June, 2003. Nowadays the necessary organizational, technical, construction and other actions are being carried out in order to create new transport route allowing the countries of Central Asia to reach the Persian Gulf.

I'd like to mention briefly other perspective transport-communication projects, such as:

- Uzbekistan - Turkmenistan - Azerbaijan - Georgia;
- Uzbekistan - Turkmenistan - Iran;
- Uzbekistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan;
- Uzbekistan - Kyrgyzstan - China.

It is necessary to note that implementation of any of these projects is in the strategic interest of many countries including the European countries, USA, Russia, China, Iran and etc.

**Tashkent - Turkmenbashi - Baku - Poti** route as a part of •••••• program is being developed by the European Union with a view of connection of Europe with Central Asia. As it is now seen, the development of this corridor in many respects depends on the further development of a geopolitics situation in this macroregion, positions of the countries through which the route runs.

Within the framework of the communication project **Uzbekistan - Turkmenistan - Iran**, 302 km route Tedzhen - Serahs - Meshed started up its operation in 1996. The construction of this route was carried out by Central Asian countries together with Iran. If length of Transsiberian railway route was 14 000 km now it is 9,500 km. At the same time, operation of the railway corridor is complicated for Uzbekistan by virtue of the political and organizational reasons. It is also affected by imperfection of available legal base.

The transport corridor **Uzbekistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan** is rather perspective for Uzbekistan. Its creation will allow changing the geostrategic and economic situation in the region, promoting intensive development of trans-Asian and Euro-Asian connections.

At last, within the framework of the project **Uzbekistan - Kyrgyzstan - China** with 985 km in length, predesign is being developed on the railroad Andizhan - •sh - Kashgar.

No doubt that implementation of the projects on construction of auto and railway routes will allow activating essentially trade and economic relations as well as changing geopolitic and economic realities in the region.

Thereby, we think it is expedient to consider by corresponding UN institutes, other international economic, financial organizations and donor-countries the following issues:

-substantial increase of aid allocated to the Central Asian states and Afghanistan for development of trade, transport and infrastructure;

-rendering practical support to the regional and inter-regional projects on transport and communication systems.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addition, I would like to point out the problems of regional integration in Central Asia, the perspective and role of Uzbekistan in the integration processes. Our country attaches outmost importance to this subject.

Certainly, we perfectly understand that Central Asia is among the vital interests of the world most powerful countries which, to some extent, show their interest in regional integration and cooperation. Moreover, these countries possess necessary resources and capabilities to perform as guarantors of stability and steady development of the entire region.

However **Uzbekistan acts strongly against so called «a new round» of geopolitical competition in the Central Asian region.** We are for open, mutually beneficial cooperation among all respective parties concerned.

To the most boldly expressed problems, which in a certain extent come up as an obstacle to the close integration in our region, I would attribute quite painful and complicate process of transition from totalitarian, a command-management system to building democratic societies with socially oriented market economy.

At the same time, existing security threats have negative impact on prospects of strengthening of regional cooperation. Besides above mentioned terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, transnational

organized crime, one can add the problems with water supply and energy resources, boundary delimitation and demarcations, absence of a common regional transport infrastructure and power systems, environment problems, etc. I can not ignore, that the certain difficulties on a way of regional integration are caused by so called "**special position**" of Turkmenistan to the given questions.

In these conditions on the level of the Heads of Central Asian states one can admit growing understanding that maintenance of national and regional security, sustainable development of our countries and prosperity of our people are impossible without close interaction, common political will, development and consecutive implementation of coherent actions.

Today we have all reasons to say that the scope of issues addressing by the Organization of «Central - Asian cooperation» which, as you are well aware, includes Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, recently has substantially extended. We are not limited to discussion of only economic issues, eventually free exchange of opinions and open dialogue on all essential problems of regional development is going on. And, what is especially important, **OCAC comes to the decision only on those problems which are equally important to all countries of the region.**

At the same time, it is necessary to note, that, despite of regular OCAC meetings at various levels, we are still far from required level of cooperation. No doubt, that today not only discussion and raising of existing problems of regional development are necessary, but first of all, it is important to have concrete practical, flexible and far-reaching actions on solutions of the questions of concern for our people.

In this regard, in Uzbekistan we believe that it is necessary to pay primary attention to the following aspects:

*First*, one of the main conditions for interstate interaction within OCAC should become **formation of joint space of regional security**. Certainly, it can be achieved under condition of adequate perception by all participants of the Central Asian integration process of existence of threats to our security and stability in the region.

*Second*, as I have already pointed out, the important and

indispensable condition for strengthening regional security, achieving its sustainable and further development is to include Afghanistan to all regional processes.

*Third*, development of an inventory of existing legal framework of regional cooperation is advisable.

*Fourth*, to have concrete decisions on cooperation, first of all, in the following fields:

- development and rational usage of natural resources;
- creation of the ramified regional transport infrastructure;
- comprehensive development of industrial, trade and economic cooperation;
- interaction in humanitarian field and finding solution of environmental problems.

Taking into account necessity of the further concrete actions aimed at deepening of integration within the OCAC, now, on behalf of heads of member states of the OCAC, the subject of creation of water, power, transport and food consortia is studied in order to develop industrial infrastructure, transport corridors in the region, cooperation in the field of telecommunications.

Dear Friends,

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize, that **today without any exaggeration one can admit that in Central Asian region huge perspectives and opportunities** for implementation of large scale investment and integration projects in the various fields of economy are available, strong market for capitals and goods is being created.

I think that your attention to the most critical and actual problems of today's Central Asia will assist in providing a new sound impulse to the international cooperation in the field of security and sustainable development, as well as it will contribute to finding practical solution to the issues, which are in the agenda of the regional development.

Thank you for your attention. Now I am prepared to answer your questions.